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The result was war, from my vantage point: the view from my porch.

Frankie Finley
Book Review

The term mestizo generally refers to a person of mixed blood, specifically of European and American Indian blood; however, Serge Gruzinski uses it in his book *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* to explain the various mélanges that occurred between people, art, and ways of life from America, Europe, Africa, and Asia during the 16th century. By this definition, mestizo processes are not singularly located within a post-colonial situation in Mexico; they are instead a product of globalization that affect all groups of people whose cultures intersect in a post-colonial situation. The mestizo mind, therefore, is the mixed state of mind that has resulted from 500 years of interactions, a state of mind that everyone possesses in a globalized world. The book is organized in three parts: the first part seeks to explain the mélange that occurred as a result of the Spanish conquest of Latin America, which resulted in mestizo processes; the second part is an in-depth examination of mestizo imagery that shows the ways in which Amerindian artists combined pre-Columbian and European images to examine the changes to their culture; and the final part is an extension of this examination, as Gruzinski breaks down images and styles in mestizo art that clearly belong to neither tradition, hybridized forms that were born out of mestizo artists’ creativity, products of the mestizo mind.

Gruzinski makes the link between mestizo culture and globalization. He also urges us to not think of globalization as a modern issue, but as
one that has been around since the Renaissance—that the shift in West-
ward expansion has just been from the Iberian expansion in the 16th
century to the American expansion of the 20th century. Globalization
has merely increased the hybridization of culture, which has, in turn,
produced more mestizo phenomena. Hybridization is a term that Gruz-
sinski uses to describe mélanges in a single situation, between traditions
and cultures that met due to conquest or that had coexisted for genera-
tions, such as post-Columbian Mexico or Christian Europe. And,
although he argues that globalization dates back to the Renaissance, he
argues that hybridization has been going on much longer, that “every
culture is hybrid and that mélanges date back to the origins of human
history” (18). The problem, then, is that we do not recognize the porous
nature of our superimposed boundaries, which allow for constant shifts
and exchanges; instead, we fetishize the concepts of identity and cul-
ture.

In the first part of the book, “Mélange, Chaos, Westernization,”
Gruzinski explores the mestizo phenomenon in the Amazon, the “lost
paradise,” whose image has been reinforced by art, media, and even sci-
ence. He claims that structuralist anthropology ignored mestizo culture
in order to maintain the notion that cultures are neither resistant to
change nor eager to change; the effect of this has been the creation and
reinforcement of clichés, or, at the very least, a view of mestizo phe-
nomenon as a form of “contamination.” Gruzinski argues that, to under-
stand the mestizo mind, we have to abandon these familiar categories
for people, places, things, and events; in addition, we have to also aban-
don our understanding of history as a linear process. To explain this, he
uses the clock and cloud models: instead of the comforting regularity of
a clock—shifting, moving, and re-shaping at random.

The random shifts, however, are often the results of triggers. For the
mestizo phenomena of 16th century Mexico, two such triggers were the
shock of conquest and Westernization. Again, Gruzinski wants us to
abandon our previous notions about these things. He argues that the con-
quest of the 16th century should not be viewed as a monolithic conquer-
ning group seizing power, however, since the Iberians were as cultura-
lly diverse as the Amerindians and Africans. The conquest had an obvious
effect on the way that these vanquished populations lived their lives, as
it subjected them to epidemics, slavery, exploitation, religious and edu-
cational restrictions, and a loss of the way of life as they knew it. Gruz-

Gruzinski argues that the Iberian conquerors also lost their bearings,
however, although it was “in an infinitely less tragic and often less con-
scious way” (47). This loss of bearings came from a physical and psy-
chical disconnection from their homeland, traditions, and lifestyles, as
they struggled to adapt to life in a foreign land among foreign peoples;
this, however, was really only an inconvenience, while for the van-
quished, the struggle to adapt was a matter of life and death. This post-
colonial situation, Gruzinski argues, was not completely destructive,
since it invited the opportunity for inventiveness among the survivors as
they strove to combine incomprehensibly diverse elements.

In the same vein as Homi Bhabha, Gruzinski discusses the trigger
of Westernization in terms of mimicry and ambivalence. In doing so, he
uses the various forms of native reproduction of European-ness, from
technology to art, to point out that Amerindian copying of Western cul-
ture ranged from exactly duplicating to “inventive interpretation” (61).
Reproduction, therefore, was a main site of the struggles between and in
between complicity and resistance; in the second part of the book,
“Mestizo Imagery,” Gruzinski takes a look at some examples of artistic
mimicry in some copies of European art done by indigenous artists, who
were free to interpret Old World artistic styles without the constraint of
tradition. He charts these indigenous artists’ use of mestizo imagery as a
means of connecting their pre-Hispanic past to their Christian present,
through their attempts to show continuity between their pagan beliefs
and Christianity. One of the most common subjects of these works of art
is mythological subjects. Gruzinski argues that this is because mythol-
ogy has an inherently hybrid nature that lent itself to appropriation and
interpretation by Amerindian scholars and artists. Hybrid forms prolifer-
erated in Renaissance art in Europe as well as Mexico, and this hybrid-
ity shows how the people of this time perceived the world—as
structurally unstable and constantly transforming due to conjunction and
disjunction. Hybridity in art also allows the work to have several simul-
taneous meanings, meanings which were sometimes used to cover up
acts of resistance to colonization and Christianization.

In “Mestizo Creativity,” the final section of the book, Gruzinski
argues that this mestizo art belongs to neither pre-Columbian nor West-
ern traditions and motifs, as allusions from these mutually-exclusive tra-
ditions come together in seemingly contradictory ways. He explores,
through several examples, the ways in which Amerindian artists and
writers used various hybrid forms of creativity to create art forms that
“endow[ed] ancient beliefs with a Christian tone” (161). This convergence worked in both ways, however, since monks also worked to Christianize Amerindian songs and dances. This mestizo art reflects a mestizo culture preoccupied with adapting to the new rules established by their conquerors while trying to rebuild their crumbling universe; the flip side is that the conquerors were using Amerindian ideology and traditions as the means to Westernize them. As contradictory as this is, however, Gruzinski’s analysis of mestizo art, as well as his connections to modern-day concerns about globalization, illuminates several interesting directions for further research. His interdisciplinary approach, which includes history, philosophy, anthropology, and visual analysis of art and film, is indicative of the complexity of the mestizo mind itself, a reality which allows us “the privilege of belonging to several worlds within a single lifetime” (208).

**Globalization in 25 Words or Less**

| The process now has a label Globalization but global social, political and economic processes are by no means a new phenomenon. | Jayde Cahir  
University of Western Sydney  
Sydney, Australia |
| --- | --- |
| A phenomenon of increasing pace of interactions of globalized networks relative to the national level accelerated by a time-space compression from ‘communication globalization’. | Hongjia How  
National University of Singapore  
Singapore |

Post-this or post-that, at the advent of the millennium or after 9/11, the stories go, the world has become fundamentally transformed. But from New York’s ground zero to George W. Bush’s zero hour for Iraq, everything points to a sclerotic paralysis at the Year Zero, the site of the announcement of change. In spite of various declarations of policy change, constitutional change, or regime change, much of what has unfolded over the past few years has appeared at best to be a return to the same. Or worse, a renewal of both internal and external articulations of the coercive apparatuses of State power under the guises of the “Patriot Act” and “Homeland Security.” Likewise, academics have recently been besotted with proclamations of the socio-economic newness of the world, from Hardt and Negri’s (Empire) claim that Empire has replaced imperialism to a slew of contemporary neo-liberalist texts proclaiming the mutable accessibility of the world under techno-economic developments of globalization. The New Imperialism takes these claims to task by reexamining the spatio-economic relations of capitalist accumulation that have produced the current self-destructive climate of imperialism and exploitation.

In spite his title, Harvey is reluctant to divorce the present condition of new imperialism from the development of capitalism in the U.S. over the course of the last century. Rather, as he has done elsewhere (see Harvey, Condition), he opts to plot a course of crises and subsequent adjustments occurring within the global develop-